
School: Round Hill Primary

Meeting title: Collaboration: What Next? working party

Date and time: Thursday, 10 December, 2015 at 6:30pm

Location: At the school

In attendance

Mr R Jones

Ms J Marshall

Mrs J Miller

Mr A Nash (headteacher)

Apologies

Ms O Kershaw

Mrs S Yates

Purpose of meeting: To review previous papers to FGB and hear feedback from recent events and courses to further explore what next steps we as FGB need to consider, including providing recommendations to FGB, if consensus reached.

Review of previously circulated documents

Document 1: **Academy status – discussion paper. Round Hill Primary School, Autumn Term 2015 Richard Jones**

The table summarising the differences between Academy and Maintained status are simplified, but form a useful starting point.

Option 5 – becoming a single Academy was rejected previously by FGB

There are more options than the Academy / Maintained dichotomy. It would be useful to have an updated and more complete table, detailing the implications on admissions / employment / governance etc for Partnerships, Collaboration models, Federations, Cooperative Trusts and MATS.

Recommendation 1 – RJ/AN to approach LA for advice on developing the table further.

Document 2 **Leadership and Governance Solutions for Improving Pupil Outcomes and Securing School Viability for Primary Schools NCC Director's report**

This document contains the following useful set of definitions.

Partnerships – in this model, groups of schools establish formal/informal agreements to work together outside the statutory framework

Collaboration – this is a formal partnership model using the school governance collaboration regulations to establish an executive/strategic committee across two or more schools, usually with

one Head teacher.

Federation – this is where two or more schools are governed collectively under a single governing body

Mixed Federations and Collaborations – where groups of schools apply both sets of regulations according to their local circumstances

Multi-Academy Trust - in this model two or more academies work in formal and informal partnership arrangements

The LA is not pushing any particular route for any individual schools, but is available to support schools as they make decisions.

Document 3 **Notes from Jennifer Bexon-Smith (East Midlands and the Humber RSC) on role of Regional School Commissioners.**

(Richard had attended this event)

Presentation was mostly relevant to academies, although note some interesting slides on context of the EM & H region.

RJ reported an impression that the RSC was adopting a pragmatic approach, about finding local solutions not pushing a particular solution for all schools.

Document 4 **Guidance Paper from NGA “Forming or joining a group of schools: staying in control of your school’s destiny”**

“This guidance is for senior leaders and governors of standalone schools (maintained schools or academies), as they consider whether to form or join federations or multi academy trusts (MATs).”

Pages xxx set out a broad-brush approach to considering these issues and it was noted that we are following ...

NGA offer paid for services (including consultancy/training events) if we opted to follow this path, NGA not pushing any particular outcome for individual schools.

It was noted that it is often said that federations and MATs allow a school to “be in control of our own destiny” – We asked the question: *Do we feel out of control of our destiny currently?* Attendees considered that we don’t feel this to be the case. No examples could be thought of where we had wanted to go in a particular direction that had been impossible because of being a maintained school. We do value the support of LA and other schools. There are many services we currently receive through / purchase from LA. It was felt that we do not know costings for or availability of alternatives.

Recommendation 2 – F&GP oversees some robust, selective benchmarking of alternative service providers in setting FY16-17 budget.
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Document 5 **NCC Governor training notes “Leadership and Governance Solutions”**

(Jane had attended this event)

Cooperative Trust (Maintained schools) is different from a Multi-academy Trust (Academy)

Shortage of heads nationally will lead to needing to share Heads around schools

This training was valued – if we wanted further training we could explore provision from these trainers.

Documents 6 & 7 **Cooperative Trust Information**

(Jane had attended this event)

The Cooperative Trust is an organisation that helps schools form formal cooperative working arrangements – worth exploring if we were heading down this route.

A complicated structure of CEO / Governing body

Cooperative Trust is run as a business

Some local schools are considering forming a local Cooperative Trust.

Governors employ staff under this structure and the governing body is responsible for their terms and conditions of pay and employment.

Discussion

With some MATs, it was considered that the Trust Board (or in reality quite often an Executive Head) has ultimate direction over the schools in the trust. Thus, as a single school (particularly one joining an established MAT) you risk loss of control of your destiny.

It was acknowledged that we still feel there remain important points of detail that we don't fully understand about the various options.

A Government White Paper is anticipated for early 2016 and a consultation will be taking place on a new national funding formula. The meeting considered it is worth waiting to see what the roles and functions of the LA will become. We currently acknowledge that we value our affiliation with the LA, however if some / all of the functions of the LA were to reduce we would need alternative support.

The meeting considered that options such as Federation / Trust / MAT are not currently our choice to explore. Key reasons included: there remains much we don't understand about benefits and in particular risks (particularly extent of responsibilities the GB assumes); it could also mean we lose control/ownership of our own values/vision. In short, there is currently no need for Round Hill to be actively pursuing one of these options.

The meeting did consider that Partnership / Collaboration, remaining in control of our destiny, should be explored further:

- Could we do more with the family of schools to be improving?
- Can we learn from local schools' governing bodies?

AN reported briefly on some benefits of our current situation with local family of schools:

- Shared training and learning between heads and staff
- Shared recommendations / knowledge about providers - but not shared purchasing
- SEN funding is shared out of a "pot" amongst family of schools

Conclusion

Recommendations

3. We should be looking at deepening and widening the scope of what we do in partnership with local schools, with the possibility of heading towards a more formal partnership or possibly collaboration. To enact this recommendation each committee should understand the current partnership working taking place within its remit, and explore 'what next'.

4. At this point we do **not** recommend moving towards a model involving Federation / Trust / MAT status.
5. We should initiate discussions with other local governing bodies, to learn from and with each other about areas of common interest, and to explore how / where we can work together.
6. The Working Party should continue throughout the year to deepen our understanding of the options and enable continued proactive thinking on the options.